

UG MARYLAND YMF STATE WETLAND CONSERVATION PLAN

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: May 23, 2000

Location: US FWS
177 Admiral Cochrane Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401

Workgroup members In attendance	Workgroup members Not in attendance	MDE Staff, Speakers, Visitors
Tim Goodger (Nat. Marine & Fisheries) Lynn Stemmy (MTR SWQAC) Greg Kappler (Coastal Res. Advis. Com.) Bob DeGroot (MAGIC) Mildred Kriemelmeyer (MD Conservation Council) George Wilmot (SWQAC) Kathleen McHugh (MD State Builders Assoc.) Lee Anne Chandler (Critical Area Commission) Mike Fritz (Environmental Protection Agency) Barbara Samorajczyk (MD Assoc. of Counties) Mary Abrams (MD Office of Planning) Larry Liebesman (MD Builders Assn.) Trevor Clark (substituting for Bob Pennington) Diana Reynolds (MD Department of Agriculture) William Giese (MASCD) Jenn Aiosa (Chesapeake Bay Foundation) Robert Agee (MD Aggregates Association) Brian Bernstein (MD State Highway Admin.) Jeff Trulick (US Army Corps of Engineers) Pete Alexander (MD Forest Assoc.) Ed Temple (Ducks Unlimited) Zoe Piendak (Gov. Office of Business Advocacy/DBED) Catherine Rappe (MD Department of Natural Resources)	Bob Pennington (US Fish & Wildlife) Tom Benassi (BGE) Richard Hersey (Herrin Run Assoc.) Louise Lawrence (MD Dept. of Agricult.) Danielle Lucid (Dept. Nat. Resources) Regina Poeske (EPA) Larry Simms (MD Watermans Assoc.) Evan Smith (Conservation Fund) Mark Colosimo (US Army Corps of Eng.) Danielle Lucid (MD Department of Natural Resources) Keith Bowers (BioHabitats) Anne Lynn (Natural Resources Conservation Service) Ren Serey (Critical Area Commission) Bob Kaufman (MD Builders Association) Kevin Kelly (Environ. Systems Anal., Inc.) Lynne Hoot (MD Association of Soil Conservation Districts) Don Outen (Baltimore County DEPRM) Suzie Jacobs (MD State Highway Admin.) Steve Bunker (Nature Conservancy)	Denise Clearwater (MDE) Julie LaBranche (MDE) Michael McCoy (MDE)

I. Introduction

Linda Harper began the meeting by recognizing a new Workgroup member; Trevor Clark, from the USFWS. The rest of the Workgroup then introduced themselves once again. Linda then began the new business for the meeting by giving Denise Clearwater the floor, to begin a review of handout documents.

II. Presentations

Denise Clearwater (MDE) reviewed the chart handed out at the last meeting, which describes how various federal, state, and local programs affect wetlands. She addressed concerns over how the chart was formatted, and then presented the newly formatted chart [available on the SWCP website] which simply lists all the major programs and laws affecting wetlands. The Workgroup requested the addition of the Clean Water Act to the required Programs section, and the review of further laws and programs for addition, using the “Cliff’s Notes” document as a guide. *[Section 401 and 404 were already included]*.

Next, Denise proceeded to cover the next newly presented handout, which describes the wetlands acreage losses in Maryland by watershed. She then described the sources of the data and their tendencies to over-estimate wetland loss, as follows;

Historic wetland acreage was calculated by summing the area of the specific hydric soils groups, estimated from the Natural Soil Groups data (1973). The use of hydric soils in this method is thought to over-estimate the acreage of wetlands.

Present acreage was estimated by visual interpretation of National Wetlands Inventory maps, which is thought to yield an under-estimation of wetland acreage.

From the Workgroup’s request, MDE staff agreed to research other data sources such as SAV distribution maps, floodplain maps, and revised soil maps to obtain an improved estimate of baseline wetland data.-

Denise then continued by reviewing the final new handout, which shows the MDE nontidal wetland acreage gains/ losses by watershed. Denise explained the sources of the data for the calculations, and what they did and did not cover as follows;

The baseline wetlands data was compiled in the 1980’s, and obtained from Tiner and Burke’s, *Wetlands of Maryland*.

Permanent impacts, permittee mitigation, and programatic gains data are from the MDE Wetlands and Waterways Program. Other gains listed originate from actions that also require permits.

Activities that MDE does not permit, (and unreported illegal impacts) are also not included in these calculations. Included in the activities that MDE does not permit are certain Corps of Engineers Authorized projects. Denise explained some of the difficulties with trying to determine these impacts with current data. MDE staff will provide more detailed permit information at the next meeting. MDE will also try to retrieve nationwide permit information, although currently this data is incomplete.

Larry Liebesman (MD Builders' Association) asked if it was possible to determine the impacts on wetlands of special state concern. He also called attention to additional non-tracked voluntary increases in wetland acreage, including by agriculture. The Workgroup identified the topic of improved wetlands gains and losses tracking as an information gap that should be addressed in the Plan, but would likely not be resolved by the Plan itself.

After this, Denise led the Workgroup in a discussion of wetland functional assessment, which could potentially be used in future wetlands planning and permitting. She asked for suggestions for parameters that should be covered in a functional assessment. Suggestions included:

- A GIS-based approach
- Local watershed scale
- Use of State Highway Administration's field assessment data
- Surrounding land use
- Priority protection areas

The Workgroup voiced additional concerns pertaining to functional assessment, including determining impacts to wetland function without losses of wetland acreage, and determining the losses of wetland function by natural causes. MDE staff stated that they will continue to address issues of impacts tracking and wetland assessment over the coming meetings.

The Workgroup also debated the alternatives of gathering baseline wetlands information to help complete the Plan, or having the Plan provide for the identification of these knowledge gaps, and the gathering of needed data. The group reached general consensus that all available and existing data should be compiled, analyzed, and augmented during the Plan's development, and additional major data gaps should be identified in the plan for resolution.

Break

III. Sub-groups

After the break, Linda Harper asked the Workgroup to divide into two subgroups, representing those wishing to discuss regulatory or non-regulatory aspects of wetlands planning. The sub-groups were given two tasks; to identify major gaps in their respective area, and to prioritize a list of topics that may require MDE staff research, and are needed for further discussion by the sub-group.

After the sub-group discussion time ended, each of the groups presented their findings.

Mike Fritz (EPA) presented the findings of the non-regulatory subgroup, as follows:

Gaps:

- 1) Nonregulated wetlands gains and losses
 - Affects from USDA programs such as the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), & Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP)
 - Impacts that do not trigger permitting
 - Natural gains and losses

- Voluntary gains, especially those completed by organizations

2) Technology distribution to the field level

- Targeting models
- Watershed analysis for Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) at local scale
- Updated soil surveys

3) Incentives

- Money to create incentives for wetlands protection
- Incorporation of wetlands preservation and conservation into Priority Funding Areas (PFA's) with smart growth

Priority Issues

Reviewing findings of the Public Drainage Association (PDA) task force for points of possible cooperation. The task force conducted an examination of the impacts of ditch maintenance and of ditching itself on the Bay and nutrient delivery.

Increasing protection incentives

Integration of existing programs of all levels

Further identification of programs pertaining to wetlands

Finding new ways of promoting wetland conservation

Expanding public knowledge, appreciation of wetlands economic and functional values

The regulatory subgroup was then given the opportunity to comment on the non-regulatory group's findings. Jeff Trulick (Corps) suggested looking to the Corps for funding for wetlands restoration and planning.

The regulatory subgroup then presented their findings, as follows;

Gaps & Issues – covering data, technical skills, and process

Enforcement of erosion control

Certification/ licensing of wetlands permit writers and delineators

Follow-up and enforcement of permits

Better understanding of process by local governments

No central data center

Updates to 1972 tidal boundaries

The non-regulatory subgroup was then given the opportunity to comment on these findings.

IV. Conclusion

Linda summarized the discussion of the Workgroup from the meeting. MDE staff were tasked with choosing topics to address for the next meeting, based on those that were identified by the subgroups. The meeting time for the next three months was scheduled for the fourth Tuesdays of the month (June 27, July 25th, Aug 22nd), at 9:00 AM.